North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office

Guidance for Using NCHPO Google Earth KMZ files

KMZ and KML files are map "layers" showing the locations of features on the earth's surface that you can install on your computer and display in Google Earth. They are displayed on top of the Google Earth aerial images that are being transmitted to your computer over the internet.

The HPO now has complete National Register locations and (most) boundaries for properties and districts currently listed in the National Register of Historic Places mapped with GIS software. The GIS software can export these layers as KMZ files. If there is sufficient interest, the HPO will update National Register point and boundary files monthly or quarterly. The files will have the name *NC-NR-points[or polygons]-mm-dd-yy.kmz*, with the date given being the date of the most recent NR listing in the file.

What they do:

KMZ *points* mark the location (or near location) of the key feature in individual property nominations, usually a house or other building. They also label the point with the property name.

KMZ *polygons* display the boundaries of all districts and those properties for which boundary information in the nomination is sufficient to draw a boundary with GIS software. Google Earth is not able to label polygons with the district or property name. For individual listings, the point within the polygon will provide the name. Until we are able to create "centroid" points for districts, you will have to use the NPS NRHP point layer to identify districts. See the HPO website for instructions on downloading NPS NRHP points.

You can also label selected polygon boundaries using the "placemark" function in Google Earth.

What they don't do:

KMZ layers don't enable you to search on or display specific properties or districts based on keywords in the property names. For example, you can't limit the display only to those that have the word "Presbyterian" in them – unless you go through the whole list unchecking all those that don't have "Presbyterian."

A Few Hints

Installation: When you first install the KMZ files, they are loaded in the Temporary Places section of the Places window on the left. You can move them up into My Places by dragging them up, or, when you quit Google Earth, you will be asked if you want to keep them. If you say "yes," they will be savend and will appear in My Places the next time you open Google Earth.

Tilting. Google Earth 4.3 has the annoying default to "tilt" the image as you zoom in to a place (as if you're coming in on an airplane). To keep that from happening, go to Tools, Option, Navigation, and uncheck the box that says "Automatically tilt while zooming."

Changing the Display Values

You can change the size and color of the icons and text labels for points, and the line width and color for polygons.

Points: To change the display for points, RIGHT click on the layer name (*NC-NR-points-mm-dd-yy*), then
Click "properties" at the bottom of the menu that appears
Click, the "style, color" tab.
If the next window asks if you want to share the values with sub-folders, click "share" or "yes"
Change the color, size, and opacity of the label (text) and the icon. Then click OK.

If you change the color of the labels to white (to be easier to read on the dark aerial backgrounds), the change won't appear until you close Google Earth and reopen it.

Polygons: To change the line width and/or color for polygons, Right click on the layer name (*NC-NR-polygons-mm-dd-yy*), then
Click "properties" at the bottom of the menu that appears
Click, the "style, color" tab.
If the next window asks if you want to share the values with sub-folders, click "share" or "yes."
Change the color, width, and opacity of the line. If you want the areas within the boundary lines to be "hollow" (without color or shading), select "outlined" in the dropdown. If you want them to have color or shading, select "filled" or "filled and outlined," select a color, and select a degree of opacity.